



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

APPLICATIONS AND PAPERWORK



CAN I SET UP A PAYMENT PLAN FOR SUBMITTING MY CERTIFICATION FEES?

Yes! If you are unable to pay the balance of your certification fee by the due date (February 1st for producers and March 1st for handlers or processors), contact Jennifer Watson to set up a payment plan prior to the February 1st deadline. Jennifer will work with you to set up a payment plan that works for your operation and ensures your certification fees are paid in full. Jennifer can be reached at (360) 902-1885 or email: jwatson@agr.wa.gov.

ARE APPLICATION FORMS AVAILABLE ON-LINE?

Yes! Copies of all application forms can be found at the WSDA Organic Food Program Website: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>. Forms are available in both PDF and Word format. Forms in Word format may be saved and filled out electronically. If you complete the forms electronically you will need to print them and mail the hard copies to the Olympia office. We do not have the capacity to accept electronic applications at this time but we hope to have that capacity in the future.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT RENEW MY CERTIFICATION?

Your organic certification continues to be effective until you withdraw or surrender from the organic certification program, or WSDA suspends or revokes your certification. Certified operations that do not withdraw from the organic certification program are responsible for paying their annual certification fees. If you do not intend to renew your certification please contact WSDA by phone, email, letter or fax and state that you would like to withdraw from the program. Please note that withdrawn operations may re-apply for certification as a new applicant at a later date.

After the renewal due date, WSDA will identify the certified operations that have not renewed or withdrawn from certification. Notices of Noncompliance will be issued to all operations that have not renewed or withdrawn along with an invoice for the annual certification fee. If we do not receive a response to the Notice of Noncompliance, a Notice of Proposed Suspension will be issued. If there is no response to the Notice of Proposed Suspension the operation will be suspended from the National Organic Program.

CROP AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS



HOW DO I GET A NEW SITE OR FIELD CERTIFIED?

If you would like to add a new site or field to your certification, you must submit a new Site Application Packet (consisting of Instructions, a Site Information Form, and a Previous Land Use Declaration Form). Please contact our office for copies of these forms by calling (360) 902-1805, email: organic@agr.wa.gov, or by visiting our website for electronic versions of the documents: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>.

WHAT IF I WANT TO REMOVE A SITE FROM ORGANIC CERTIFICATION?

You must notify the WSDA Organic Food Program if you are removing acreage from the organic certification program. The WSDA Organic Food Program must be notified *prior* to treating the site or acreage with a prohibited material. Once you have notified the WSDA Organic Food Program, the site or acreage will be removed from your organic food certificate.

HOW CAN I DETERMINE WHAT MATERIALS I AM ALLOWED TO USE ON MY ORGANIC FARM OR WITH MY LIVESTOCK?

Certified organic food and livestock producers have a variety of tools to help determine if a material is allowed in organic production. National Organic Standards say that you may use any material that is considered natural. If a material is synthetic, you should refer to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (Section 205.601 for crops, 205.603 for livestock) to determine if it is approved for use in organic systems. Additional information regarding allowed compost,



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minerals, fertility inputs, livestock supplements and feed additives can also be found in the Standards, (Sections 205.200 through 205.239).

If you are using a brand name material (such as Solubor or Carbovirine), you may refer to the WSDA Brand Name Material List (BNML) or the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) (www.omri.org). The BNML and OMRI provide lists of brand name materials that have been reviewed and determined to meet the National Organic Standards. Make sure to pay careful attention to annotations and restrictions listed regarding the approval of a material. When in doubt, call the office and we can help to clarify if a material can be used on your organic farm.

DO I NEED TO NOTIFY WSDA IF MY ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN CHANGES DURING THE YEAR?

The Organic System Plan should describe your plans for producing organic crops or livestock and include a list of all inputs you are planning to use. It is understood that environmental, economic, and other reasons can cause you to modify this plan as the year progresses. The National Organic Program requires that certified operations notify their certifying agent *prior* to making any changes that could affect the integrity of organic products.

The following are examples of situations that would require you to notify the WSDA Organic Program:

- Apply a prohibited substance to any field, production unit, livestock, product or site in organic production.
- Utilize a new type of fertilizer, crop production aid, or pest control material that is not included in your Organic System Plan (NOTE: Substitutions of one material for another do not require prior notification, e.g. substituting approved Bt products.)
- Add a site to organic production (you must submit a New Site Application Packet).
- Remove a site or a portion of a site from organic production.
- Utilize a new label for your organic products.
- Acquire replacement animals.
- Purchase new organic products from other producers.
- Begin processing organic food products or handle organic products produced by other organic producers;
- Or change any other portion of a certified operation that may affect your compliance with the National Organic Standards.

You can notify WSDA of those changes by letter, email, or fax:

WSDA Organic Food Program
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
Email: organic@agr.wa.gov
FAX (360) 902-2087.



WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO HAVE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW DURING MY ORGANIC FOOD INSPECTION?

An inspector will contact you to schedule your inspection. Be prepared to allow time for your inspection. An organic inspection can take from one to many hours depending on the size and complexity of the operation. An audit of your practices will take place during your organic food inspection to ensure that appropriate records are being kept. Records should include, but are not limited to:

- Material application records
- Material receipts and invoices
- Composting records
- Accurate site maps
- Verification of your attempts to source organic seeds
- Sales records
- Yield or other production records



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HANDLERS AND PROCESSORS

(INCLUDING BROKERAGE, MARKETING COMPANIES, RESTAURANT AND RETAIL STORES)

I AM A PRODUCER THAT IS ALSO CERTIFIED AS A PROCESSOR OR HANDLER. WHERE IS MY ORGANIC HANDLING APPLICATION?

If you process on your farm and/or handle other certified organic producers' products, your business will require organic processor or organic handler certification, in addition to your producer certification. Renewal Processor/Handler applications will be mailed to applicants in early January. Renewal Processor/Handler applications are due March 1. If you have further questions pertaining to either obtaining or maintaining Organic Processor or Organic Handler certification, please contact Brenda Book at (360) 902-2090 or email: bbook@agr.wa.gov

HOW DO I ADD A NEW PRODUCT TO MY CERTIFICATION?

A certified Handler or Processor may add a new product to their certificate anytime throughout the year. The following items must be submitted and approved by the WSDA Organic Program *prior* to the addition of a new product to a certificate:

- **Handlers:** A copy of the organic certificate and the label for all new organic products must be submitted and approved in order for the product to be added to your organic certificate.
- **Processors:** A product formulation, label, organic certificates for all organic ingredients, and information regarding any non-organic ingredient or processing aid, must be submitted and approved in order for the new product to be added to your organic certificate. Please refer to the "Instructions for Certification of New Organic Products" included in your renewal application.

DO I NEED TO NOTIFY WSDA IF MY ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN CHANGES DURING THE YEAR?

The Organic System Plan should describe your plans for handling or processing organic products and include a list of all inputs you are planning to use. It is understood that environmental, economic, and other reasons can cause you to modify this plan as the year progresses. The National Organic Program requires that certified operations notify their certifying agent *prior* to making any changes that could affect the integrity of organic products.

The following are examples of situations that would require you to notify the WSDA Organic Program:

- Contamination of an organic ingredient or product with a prohibited material.
- Make a change to the types of inputs used at your operation (cleaning/sanitation of food contact surfaces, post harvest materials, processing aids, pest control substances, boiler water additives, etc.).
- Add a new packing or processing line to your organic certification (NOTE: An inspection may be required prior to certification).
- Move your facility to a new location.
- Utilize a new label for your organic products.
- Sell, label, or represent a new product as "organic".
- Change any portion of a certified operation that may affect your compliance with the National Organic Standards.

You can notify WSDA of those changes by letter, email, or fax:

WSDA Organic Food Program
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
Email: organic@agr.wa.gov
FAX (360) 902-2087





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HOW DO I DETERMINE WHAT SUBSTANCES ARE APPROVED FOR USE FOR DIRECT CONTACT WITH ORGANIC PRODUCTS?

A **post harvest material** is a substance that is used on a raw organic crop prior to packaging or processing of the crop. In order to use a post harvest material directly on an organic crop product, the material must be an approved agricultural product, or must be listed in section 205.601 of the National List and used in accordance with any noted annotations.

According to the National Organic Standards, a **processing aid** is defined as (a) substance that is added to a food during processing, but is removed in some manner from the food before it is packaged in its finished form; (b) a substance that is added to a food during processing, is converted into constituents normally present in the food, and does not significantly increase the amount of the constituents naturally found in the food; and (c) a substance that is added to a food for its technical or functional effect in the processing, but is present in the finished food at insignificant levels and does not have any technical or functional effect in that food.

- In order to use a processing aid in or on an organic product labeled as “100% organic” the processing aid must be certified organic.
- In order to use a processing aid in or on an organic product labeled as “organic,” or “made with organic (specific ingredients or food groups),” the processing aid must be an approved agricultural product, or must be listed in section 205.605 of the National List.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO HAVE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW DURING MY ORGANIC FOOD INSPECTION?

An inspector will contact you to schedule your inspection. Be prepared to allow time for your inspection. An organic inspection can take from one to many hours depending on the size and complexity of the operation. Complete and accurate records must be kept that track the organic food products from receiving through final sale or shipping. An audit of your practices will take place during your organic food inspection to ensure that appropriate records are being kept. Records should include, but are not limited to:

- Receiving records
- Purchase orders
- Bills of lading
- Scale tickets
- Organic certificates
- Inventory records
- Batch recipes
- Production logs
- Waste logs
- Pest management records
- Sales and shipping documentation



STANDARDS AND UPDATED INFORMATION ON THE ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM

HOW DO I GET A COMPLETE COPY OF THE UPDATED NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS OR THE WSDA REGULATIONS?

Contact our office at (360) 902-1805 or email: organic@agr.wa.gov to get a hardcopy of the National Organic Standards or the WSDA Regulations. You may also visit the WSDA Organic Food Program website (<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>) or the USDA National Organic Program Website (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>) for complete copies of the standards.



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HOW DO I CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE WSDA ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD?

The Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) Organic Advisory Board (OAB) was established in 1987 to advise WSDA concerning the implementation of the WSDA Organic Food Program. The OAB consists of organic farmers, processors, handlers and other interested parties that meet 3-4 times a year to discuss the Organic Food Program and recommend policy to the WSDA Organic Food Program. Certified operations and the public are always welcome to attend OAB meetings, but please be sure to contact our office so we can allow time for your comments. Visit the Organic Advisory Board page on our website for OAB member contact information, applications, meeting agendas and notes: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/OAB.htm>. If you have any questions about the Organic Advisory Board contact Miles McEvoy at (360) 902-1924, email: mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov.

WHERE CAN I FIND PAST ISSUES OF THE WSDA QUARTERLY REPORT?

The Quarterly Report is published by the Organic Food Program to keep our certified organic producers, processors and handlers updated on current events within the state and federal programs. Past issues are posted on our website at: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>. We look forward to comments and feedback, or send us a question and we may address it in the next issue!!



EUROPEAN ORGANIC VERIFICATION PROGRAM & EXPORTING ORGANIC PRODUCTS

HOW DO I APPLY FOR CERTIFICATION UNDER THE WSDA EUROPEAN ORGANIC VERIFICATION PROGRAM (EOVP)?

The WSDA European Organic Verification Program provides additional certification for operations that are exporting organic crops or products to the European Union. Operations that participated in the WSDA European Organic Verification Program during the last year are sent an EOVP application packet. If you were not certified under this program last year, but would like to apply for European certification for the upcoming year, please contact our office for a copy of the application and requirements at (360) 902-1805, email: organic@agr.wa.gov. You may also visit our website to get the forms and information online: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>.

Please note that a certified operation may apply for certification under the WSDA European Program mid-year, however, an additional inspection and related inspection fees at \$40 per hour may be required. European standards prohibit certification after the crop has been harvested.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXPORT AN ORGANIC PRODUCT TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES?

Several governments require specific documentation from a USDA Certification Agency before the organic product can enter the foreign country (Europe, Japan, Korea). WSDA Organic Food Program has the ability to provide these exports documents in order to facilitate the shipping of an organic product. Please contact Brenda Book at (360) 902-2090, email: bbook@agr.wa.gov for export document forms or applications, or with questions regarding the requirements of exporting products to the foreign countries.



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ORGANIC PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

WHO DO I CONTACT AT THE ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM WITH QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO MY OPERATION?

The WSDA Organic Food Program staff bring unique backgrounds and areas of special interest that, together, form a well-rounded staff that is able to answer your questions about organic certification. The following is a list of Organic Food Program office staff, their contact information, and descriptions of their areas of specialty. Please use this list to determine who will be best able to answer any questions that may arise during the year:

Mindy Ballinger: Materials Assistant and Export Document Assistant, Olympia, (360) 902-1877, mballinger@agr.wa.gov. Contact Mindy for general information on the material registration program and export documentation

Christa Bemis: Receptionist, Olympia, (360) 902-1805, cbemis@agr.wa.gov. Contact Christa with requests for copies of application or recordkeeping forms as well as copies of forms that you submitted.

Brenda Book: Organic Handler/Processor Certification Specialist and International Program Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-2090, bbook@agr.wa.gov. Contact Brenda with questions pertaining to handler/processor certification, European and Japan certification, and export documentation needs.

Richard Carr: Organic Crops Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 725-5492, rcarr@agr.wa.gov. Contact Richard with questions pertaining to crop producer certification.

Les Eklund: Organic Field Supervisor, Olympia, (360) 902-1981, leklund@agr.wa.gov. Contact Les with questions pertaining to when to expect your organic food inspection or with feedback on your annual organic inspections.

Miles McEvoy: Organic Program Manager, Olympia, (360) 902-1924, mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov. Contact Miles with questions pertaining to program development, customer service, the Organic Advisory Board, accreditation and to report complaints concerning violations of organic standards.

Jennifer Watson: Organic Fee Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1885, jwatson@agr.wa.gov. Contact Jennifer with questions about your organic certification fees, refunds, and setting up payment plans.

Katherine Withey: Organic Livestock Certification Specialist and Material Registration Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1882, kwithey@agr.wa.gov. Contact Katherine with questions pertaining to livestock certification and material registration

Organic Field Inspectors:

Pamela Coleman	Moses Lake, WA
Jeff Collins	Chelan, WA
Mike Haskett	Yakima, WA
Erin Mirrett	Vancouver, WA
John Morrison	Spokane, WA
David Simpson	Olympia, WA
Georgana Webster	Lynden, WA

We look forward to continuing to work with you to create an organic certification program that meets both your needs and the requirements of the National Organic Program!